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THROUGH A
GLASS, LIGHTLY

by

ROBERT GITTINGS

A Play in One Act



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THROUGH A GLASS, LIGHTLY

by

ROBERT GITTINGS

B. 14
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CHARACTERS

THE USHER.

THE CLERK.

THE FOREMAN.

THE JUDGE.

THE JURY.

SCENE: The Court-room of a small District
Court-house in a Western Country.

TIME: The Present.

G I T

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THROUGH A GLASS, LIGHTLY

The time is the present. The scene is the court-room of a small district court-house in any Western country. The judge's table and chair is on a dais in the centre of the wall; to its left the jury-box and a small door leading to the corridor; to its right, a window, letting in the morning sunlight. The USHER, a tall drooping man, surveys this window, which he has just mended, with gloomy pride. The CLERK, small, fussy, sparrowlike, is hopping about the chairs and desks in the middle of the court.

USHER: Putty!

CLERK: Well, is the window mended?

USHER: There's putty
All round the inside, and inside my fingernails too.
I'm going to wash.

CLERK: Well, well, this court-house needed
More light. Yes, the new pane will brighten us up.
I've often hardly been able to see what I'm reading.

USHER: No one hears what the clerk of the court reads
anyway.

If you had to be heard like me you'd soon lose your job
here——

Mumble, mumble, mumble, and crackling your papers
Like a mouse in a laundry basket.

CLERK: Really,
Usher, I must say——

USHER: That's just it. You don't have
To say a thing, just snuffle through it. I have
To sing it all out, and get it right. My father

Trained me for singing, and look at me now. I also
Have to mend windows, it seems.

CLERK: But——

USHER: Is there a nailbrush
In the wash-house? I suppose not. Cleanliness
Next to godliness, nothing to do with Justice.
There's an awful mess on the Judge's desk.

CLERK: Oh dear, yes,
So there is. Ink!

USHER: You'll need a scrubbing-brush
Not a nailbrush. I'll fetch some soap and a basin.

CLERK: Yes. Can you reach this picture? Your arms are
longer,
And your hands aren't covered in ink.

USHER: All right then. That's straightened him.
Think he was better a bit on the skew. More natural.
More like yesterday——

CLERK: Usher, please fetch the soap, and
Please don't discuss what happened yesterday. Dear me!
Broken glass on the floor! A dustpan and brush too!

USHER: All right, but it was pretty public, not to say
Obvious, wasn't it?

CLERK: The matter's sub judice!

USHER: What's that?

CLERK: We mustn't talk of it. We're to get
this court-house
Ready for a special session, that's all.

USHER: All!

Him sit today? He'll never sit today! He was——

CLERK: Soap! And brushes! And dustpan! And broom!

USHER: All right then!

I don't believe it. There'll be no session today!

*(He goes off grumbling into a small washroom through a door
down on the right.)*

CLERK: Oh dear, dear!

(Enter from the corridor, the FOREMAN of the jury. He is a tall good-looking man with humorous mobile features. He is well-dressed, and carries a rather large wide-brimmed hat.)

FOREMAN: Hi! Is this right?

CLERK: Right and wrong,
In a manner of speaking. This is a Court of Justice,
If you mean that.

FOREMAN: Ah! This is the court then.
Where do I sit?

CLERK: Sit? Who are you exactly?

FOREMAN: Special jurymen. Called for today.

CLERK: The jury!
But you're early, too early!

FOREMAN: I was called for
Ten o'clock sharp. I have a reputation for
Punctuality in my profession. Ten sharp means
Nine forty-five for me.

CLERK: Well, it means ten o'clock here.
It isn't punctual to be before time. It's only
Inconvenient, very. What is your profession?

FOREMAN: Stetson's the name, my boy, Alvar Stetson.

CLERK: I didn't
Ask your name, I asked your profession.

FOREMAN: I told you.
What, don't you ever read the bills?

CLERK: The bills? Bills?
Whose bills?

FOREMAN: Posters! Outside the theatre! I shouldn't
Be doing my own publicity, but——

CLERK: Oh! An actor!

FOREMAN: An——! Yes, an actor.

CLERK: Well, you'll have to sit there then
Till the Court opens. That's where the jury sits.

FOREMAN: Here?

CLERK: Yes, there.

FOREMAN (*holding up bottle*): And may I remove this
empty bottle
From my seat?

CLERK: Oh dear, *dear*! Yes, give it to me, please.
Usher!

(*The USHER emerges from the wash-house staggering under an
assortment of brushes, pans, and brooms.*)

USHER: Here's everything out of the cleaners' cupboard.
And if cleaning the Court takes as long as cleaning my
nails,
There'll be no session today.

CLERK: Sssh. One of the jurymen
Is already here.

USHER: Poor sap.

CLERK: And do put this bottle
Somewhere.

USHER: Well, you take these doings and I'll take the
bottle.

FOREMAN: Can I assist?

CLERK: You're not supposed to speak to us
Till the Court opens.

FOREMAN: I see. The Court is not open?

USHER: It's *sub judice*. Though if you ask my
opinion——

CLERK: Usher! Dustpan and broom!

USHER: What, me brush the floor! I——!

FOREMAN: Perhaps I could help if I didn't speak?

Suppose we

All take a part. You brush down there, you dust
Down there, and I shall scrub up here in the centre.

(*They work for a moment.*)

Won't somebody sing?

USHER: Ah, now you're talking. I could sing.

FOREMAN: Then why not?

USHER: Because——

CLERK: Because this is a Court of
Justice, not a theatre.

FOREMAN (*with bottle*): I wouldn't be sure. It
Smells very like one. Scotch! Beautiful Scotch!
The patriot's pride and joy! Forgive me. I rhapsodise.
Cue for song. Usher, the stage is yours.

USHER: D'you really want me to sing? I could, you
know.

FOREMAN: I do. I do. Partly because it's so damned
Early, I want waking up, and partly to give
The shock of his life to this prim little nit-wit, who's
never
Opened his pearly-white rat-trap half a millimetre
For fear his tongue should catch cold. Sing, Usher,
awake
Justice herself from her sleepy handkerchief. Sing!

CLERK: No!

FOREMAN: Yes.

CLERK: No, no! You can't, you mustn't!

USHER: I can!

CLERK: But
Please, please don't! Oh *please*!

FOREMAN: He's almost in tears now.
What is the matter? Has he been drinking?

CLERK: No, no!

Only, well, yesterday was so terrible, awful.
I couldn't stand another like it.

FOREMAN: Like what?

CLERK: Like what happened. The noise and the singing.
Yes, singing!

If anything like it happens again, if it gets
Reported, I shall be out of a job. I know I shall.

USHER: Why, it wasn't your fault.

CLERK: I ought to have seen.
I ought to have done something earlier. I'm no good
At quick decisions. I only read what's in front of me,
Sometimes not that. I'm not a leader of men.

FOREMAN: No?

CLERK: No. It's my life, this job, the clerk of the court,
No authority, reading what's written, a pianist
Not a composer. I don't want to lose my job, sir.

FOREMAN: Very well. No singing. But just what did
happen here
Yesterday?

CLERK: Oh dear, *dear*, I don't like to say.

USHER: You

Ask the Judge. He's the one to say. Why, he was——

CLERK: Sssh! Sssh!
His Honour!

(Enter the JUDGE, a short man wearing rather a large wig. He goes straight to the dais, and seems to be preoccupied with his thoughts.)

CLERK: Good morning, your Honour.

USHER: Good morning, sir.

JUDGE (*sitting*): Morning! Brrr!

USHER: Window's mended, your Honour.

JUDGE: Usher!

USHER: Yes, sir?

JUDGE: What's that gang of people outside in the
passage?

USHER: Out in the passage, sir?

JUDGE: Yes, what are they? Witnesses,
Plaintiffs, defendants, why are they standing about there,
Stamping their feet like cattle, and blowing their noses

Like explosives? What's the first case on the sheet, clerk?
Clerk, where is the sheet?

CLERK: I beg your pardon,
Really, your Honour.

JUDGE: Well?

CLERK: This is a special session.

JUDGE: Special session! Why?

CLERK: You ordered it yesterday.

JUDGE: Yesterday! Did I? I did, did I!

CLERK: You did, sir.

JUDGE: Yes, I remember. Then who are those people!

USHER: The jury!
That's it, the special jury.

CLERK: Called for today, sir.

FOREMAN: Called, if I may say——

JUDGE: You may not. Who are you?

FOREMAN: I am the foreman of the jury.

JUDGE: Who said so?

FOREMAN: I was elected outside in the passage—or rather
I was the first to arrive, and so I elected
Myself.

JUDGE: Completely irregular.
(*Examines himself in a small pocket mirror.*)

USHER: If you ask me, sir——

JUDGE: Nobody did, Usher. Call in the rest of the jury.
(*Exit USHER and CLERK.*)

FOREMAN: You accept me as foreman?

JUDGE: I have accepted a task
Of considerable magnitude this morning. Brr!
I may as well accept you too.

FOREMAN: That's very good of you.
Do you know, sir, you remind me of someone.

JUDGE (*busy with the mirror*): Do I?

FOREMAN: Yes, I'm a little bit hazy. It's rather early.

JUDGE: Rather! Brrr!

FOREMAN: Of course, your wig makes it difficult.

JUDGE: A judge's wig, on the contrary, makes it easy
For fallible men to administer justice. Brrr!
Bad tongue this morning.

(Enter USHER and CLERK, bringing in the other eleven jurors, five men and six women. Since none of these ever speaks, they may be represented by students, or stage-staff, or, since their behaviour is completely stylised, some of them may even be lay-figures or dummies. If desirable, the USHER and CLERK can come into the auditorium and get eleven people near the front to stand up.)

USHER: The jury, sir!

(The jury files into place.)

No, don't sit down. Keep standing.

Don't you see his Honour!

JUDGE: You may sit, gentlemen.

Oh, and ladies, please.

FOREMAN: You know, you do

Remind me of someone.

JUDGE: If I reminded myself
A little less of myself, I should be happier——
Pouches under the eyes as big as sponge-bags——
Well, we're all human, practically. Swear in the jury.

USHER: Jury sworn, sir.

JUDGE: What!

CLERK: I took the liberty——

I hoped it showed a certain initiative——of
Administering the oath in the passage. I thought you
might, sir,
Find the noise distracting.

JUDGE: Hm. Highly irregular.

At the same time, most considerate. Thank you, clerk; now
Call the first prisoner and read the charge out, will you?

CLERK: Please, sir, I hardly like to——

JUDGE: Why, what's that you're mumbling?
Haven't I told you, you must speak up!

CLERK: Oh dear, *dear*!

USHER: Spit it out.

FOREMAN: Is something wrong with him?

USHER: Yes,
His larynx. Never been trained.

FOREMAN: Ah, voice production!
I could give him lessons——

USHER: Wasting your time, sir.
Listen to this, now.

CLERK (*reading quite unintelligibly*): "Whereas this twenty-first day of the month of August, Nineteen hundred and fifty-two, before his Honour the Judge——"

FOREMAN: Stop! This is torture!

JUDGE: I quite agree.

FOREMAN: Why not give the part to somebody else who
Has the voice for it?

USHER: I've got a voice. My Dad said——

FOREMAN: Yes, now, let him read it.

CLERK: But——

FOREMAN: Come to my classes
And I'll teach you to play Othello. You'd look
Splendid black in the face.

CLERK: Oh dear, *dear*!

USHER: I was
Trained for this sort of thing. I'll read it.

JUDGE: Do, Usher.

USHER (*reading in a sort of operatic recitative*):
"Whereas this twenty-first day of the month of August
Nineteen hundred and fifty-two, before his
Honour the Judge——"

FOREMAN: Stop! This is worse than the other.
No one said sing it, did they?

JUDGE: I certainly didn't.
His voice goes up and away across my skull
Like a two-handed saw. It's unbearable.

USHER: Sorry, your Honour.
When I talk in my ordinary voice it seems to depress
people.
That's what my wife says. She may be biased.

JUDGE: She's not.

FOREMAN: Sir, the jury must hear what they're trying—
although
They don't seem to be trying very hard. I therefore
suggest, sir,
Since I have the advantage of my profession—
You have only to look at my press-cuttings—that you
should
Use the good fortune that pushed your summons into
My letter-box early this morning. Let me read this.

JUDGE: Highly——

FOREMAN: Irregular, but effective. We shall get
On with whatever this case is supposed to be, and
All get home to lunch.

JUDGE: Lunch! No thank you!
No lunch today!

FOREMAN: No lunch! I leave my breakfast
Half-touched, my coffee half-tasted, a rack full of toast,
To come to your court, and you sit and waste time and say
"No lunch". If this is Justice, then I'll be——

JUDGE: Don't shout!

FOREMAN: I wasn't shouting. I never shout. My voice
can be

Heard in the gallery even when I whisper

JUDGE: Then would you mind

Whispering the charge for us now? If you do it
Either too soft like him or too loud like *him*,
I'll run you in for contempt of court and deliberate
Malice aforethought. Stabbing pains in the eyesockets!
Mind how you read it!

FOREMAN: Some actors, sir, have an instinct
For feeling a part at once. I, sir, am one of them.
One of the few. I shall neither throw it away,
Like our friend here, nor ham it, like him. I shall simply
Give it all that it needs.

CLERK (*pleading*): Don't do it too well, please,
Or I shall lose my job!

FOREMAN: All right, old fellow,
I'll put in a few fluffs. Now, are we ready? Here goes
then.

"Whereas this twenty-first day of the month of August
Nineteen hundred and fifty-two, before his
Honour the Judge, this Court assembled duly,
Hath been disturbed by a most unwarranted incident,
Lowering both to the dignity of this Court,
And also to the whole prestige of Justice
Throughout this state, to wit, that the said Judge
While in the execution of his sworn duty,
The court then sitting, did appear in this court-house
After lunch on the said day of the said month in
The said year aforesaid—dr—drunk and incapable——"

JUDGE (*as it all comes back to him*): Ah! Oh!

FOREMAN (*gleefully*): ". . . incapable of administering
justice,

Whereby this Court was thrown in confusion. Moreover
Whereas the said Judge at the said time did demolish
Wilfully and deliberately various properties
Incidental to this court-house, namely one
Glazed window, several inkwells, and did damage

One desk and various benches, and with malice did
Break the glass of a painted portrait, the property
Of this court-house, of a former Justice of
This state——”

JUDGE: He was about the worst Judge we
Ever had. He——

USHER: Silence in Court!

FOREMAN: Thank you, Usher.

That'll teach you to wait for your cue. Where was I?

“. . . this state, this Court, in a special session,
Convened this twenty-second of August, doth summon,
To stand his trial for being drunk, for disorderly
Conduct, and for causing damage to the total
Cost of ninety-eight dollars, his Honour Judge—
Honour—

Judge—Ju——”

JUDGE: Ericson! Can't you read the name?

You seem to read

Everything else with relish, make quite a meal of it!
Now I know why I came here. I'm the prisoner!
Well, Mister Foreman, I'll stand my trial. Here take
My robes off, usher, and you, clerk, here's my wig,
And here I'll stand at the bar, and plead—Guilty!

CLERK: Sorry about the charge, sir. I had to transcribe it
Late last night, sir, after we'd got you home, sir.
If you object to the way it's put, sir——

JUDGE: It's put

All too well. And you, Mister Foreman, are you so
Overcome by your loquacity that you just
Goggle? You're not at the Zoo. I'm not behind bars yet
Let me tell you!

FOREMAN: It's you! Judge Ericson!
It was the wig. I'd never seen you before in it.

That was what fooled me! (*Laughing.*) You! You! You!

JUDGE: Your laughter is
Causing acute disturbance.

FOREMAN: And aren't you disturbed
By me being here? What! Haven't you even recognised
Who I am?

JUDGE: I am not seeing well this morning.
The light through that window is far too strong. The
old one
Was much better.

FOREMAN: I know you only met me
Yesterday——

JUDGE: Yesterday! Heavens! Stand still. Don't
wobble!
Yes! It's——!

FOREMAN: Yes, it's——!

JUDGE: Stetson! Great heavens! You scoundrel!
Wait till I get at you! Wait! I'll——!

USHER: Begging your pardon, sir,
Oughtn't I to restrain the prisoner?

JUDGE: Prisoner? Who——?
Oh! What! Me, do you mean?

USHER: I'm sorry, I do, sir,
Begging your Honour's pardon. Only my duty, sir.
Often done it when they get nasty. You know, sir.
You remember.

JUDGE: I remember too much now.
Far too much. Alvar Stetson! You criminal!

FOREMAN: Am I the criminal? Am I the accused? Am I
The prisoner at the bar? I think not.

JUDGE: I think you
Might have considered before you came here.

FOREMAN: Considered!
What sort of consideration was shown to me? Your jury

Summons dropped on my plate like a bird down the chimney

Bang at breakfast-time, stuck all over with threats
Of fines and imprisonment if I didn't attend.

I ask you, what could I do?

JUDGE: Clerk! Why was he summoned?
Him, of all people!

CLERK: Jury register, sir. Just
Like the others, quite automatic. Actors
Aren't exempt, sir.

JUDGE: Actors! Who said actors!
Who on earth cares about actors!

FOREMAN: There is a certain
Public——

JUDGE: Acting has nothing to do with it.
Actors! No! What about lovers, eh?

CLERK: Not a profession
Under the jury register, sir.

JUDGE: I said lovers,
Using the word in a criminal sense.

FOREMAN: I object! I——!

JUDGE: Co-respondents, adulterers! You just tell the jury
That yesterday I divorced my wife, and you, sir, were
Co-respondent!

CLERK: Oh dear, *dear*! Most extraordinary!

JUDGE: Not at all extraordinary. Look at him there now,
Look at him smirking and thinking he's going to find me
Guilty. Me, guilty! Me!

CLERK: You object to the jury?

JUDGE: I object to their foreman, strongly.

CLERK: Oh dear, then we ought

To summon another juryman! Getting so late too!

We shall never——

USHER: Yes, and what about my overtime
Mending that window!

FOREMAN: I see a way out of all your
Difficulties.

JUDGE: You do? I like that! You're the cause of
them!

CLERK: Might I remind your Honour, with great respect,
sir,

You can't say that.

JUDGE: What!

CLERK: Your case is still sub judice.

FOREMAN: Aha, that's it! It's sub judice! And, I ask you,
Sub what judex? Under what judge? The judge being
Himself the prisoner, he can't be judge. A criminal
Can't be allowed to judge his own guilt.

JUDGE: Oh can't I!
I'll just show you who's guilty here!

FOREMAN: You have.

JUDGE: What!

FOREMAN: You have just shown us. You pleaded guilty.
Therefore

There is no doubt.

JUDGE: But that was before I knew you were here!

FOREMAN: Clerk, did you enter the prisoner's plea?

CLERK: I'm afraid
I did. Your Honour pleaded Guilty.

FOREMAN: It remains
Only to pass your own sentence.

JUDGE: Ha! Very kind of you!
Am I allowed to do that?

FOREMAN: That's rather a question.
You might be biased. Ah, I have it. You should hear
Counsel upon it. So should the jury.

JUDGE: There aren't

Any counsel. And if you suppose I'm going to brief
one——

FOREMAN: No need. I shall be counsel.

JUDGE: You! On what side then

Do you appear? The defence or the prosecution?

If you intend to prosecute me——

FOREMAN: On the contrary,

I'll appear for the defence.

JUDGE: For me! You can't!

FOREMAN: Can't I?

It only needs a wig. Here, you, give me that one!

JUDGE: Hi, that's mine!

CLERK: Oh dear, *dear*!

FOREMAN: You're in the dock. You

Don't wear wigs in the dock.

(Putting on wig.)

JUDGE: If I could lay

My hands on you——

USHER: Don't, sir. I wouldn't like to restrain you.

I'm used to dealing with pretty tough customers; I might

Forget myself—begging your Honour's pardon—and
clock you

One.

One.

JUDGE: Very well. Only just look here, you, sir.

I entered the Court this morning to make a gesture,

Which, I hoped, was a dignified one. If you dare

Make a farce of it——

FOREMAN: Sir, this may be comedy;

It is not farce. No. I never touch farce.

You shall see. Put your case in my hands. Let me give

My speech for the defence.

JUDGE: I suppose I must then.

Not too long, though.

FOREMAN: That is for me to decide.

The subject has certain complexities. I must do you Justice.

JUDGE: Justice! All you do is break up my marriage
By spouting in make-up. What do you know about
Justice?

FOREMAN: That will appear. I am about to begin. Hm.
Gentlemen of the jury—I beg your pardon—
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury—this is no
Ordinary case, but you, one can see, are no
Ordinary jury. Nor is my client, Judge
Ericson here, in quite an ordinary position.
What are the facts of this case? Or rather, what are
The facts of any man's actions? The mere events
Float on the surface, a rainbow of oil, clogging
Our judgment. We must dive deeper and dare to open
Our eyes underwater to see the truth. The prisoner,
A man of ripe integrity, has pleaded guilty
To gross inebriety when plain duty required
His full sobriety. Something out of the usual
Must have occurred, some unexpected tornado
Must have hit his lifeline, to turn his habits
Head over heels, and so to hocus his judgment
As to sozzle the Judge.

JUDGE: You're doing me no good,
Rubbing it in like this.

FOREMAN (*ignoring him*): You have heard the prisoner
Say that yesterday he divorced his wife. Now
Consider what that means. Consider what divorce is.
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, divorce
Has been made easy. Yes, so it says in your newspapers—
One of the benefits of our enlightenment. Easy
For whom? The wheels of Justice run easier, yes,
Suitably greased with collusion. Speedy and cheaper, but
Easy? To tear up a tree by the roots, is that easy

For the tree? To remove the eggs from the nest, is that
easy

For the bird? No. Swiftmess, economy, efficiency
Have not made human nature easy. You cannot
Treat man as a certain kind of mineral; pilots
Of aeroplanes blackout as the insensible machine
Breaks sound. And we do wrong, do violence to life
To pretend that this is otherwise. This is the real
Wrong that my client has committed, a violence
On his own nature.

JUDGE: But it was you that did it!
You ran off with her!

USHER: Silence in Court!

JUDGE: Damnation!

FOREMAN: —But committed with all the best motives.
You see his frank and

Open manner. My client made no bones about
Pleading guilty, you remember. Although his face is,
Shall we say, somewhat ravaged by his emotions,
His is a soul without guile.

JUDGE: Very pretty; but don't you
Lay it on too thick. It never goes down.

FOREMAN: His honesty does not even allow his counsel
To make the most of his character. But this I will say,
His good nature and his good nature alone,
Doing no harm to others though much to himself,
Has landed him here in the dock.

JUDGE: And how d'you make that out?

FOREMAN: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, we
In our country have an enlightened custom, rare
Even among Western nations—assuming those nations
To be the cream of this milky globe, and what Chinese,
Indians, and so on have practised for five thousand years
Or more, to be a mere Oriental irrelevance—

We, when a divorce is arranged—since divorces now
occupy

The old position of marriages, and are arranged
Rather than happening—sometimes go so far that
The husband shows his good-will, his sporting spirit,
What-have-you, by giving a luncheon or dinner party,
A send-off to the wife he has just despatched
And her partner, the co-respondent. This custom is
meant

To show how superior we are to the brutes—
Including those races of Mediterranean origin,
Who exhibit signs of possessiveness, jealousy, anger,
Even to the point of attacking each other, and take
Sex so seriously that they make a crime of it,
Known, I need not remind you, ladies and gentlemen,
As *crime passionelle*. We have risen above this.
A jolly good lunch together, a lot of Scotch
To waft the happy adulterous pair on their way,
And that's all over. But is it? I ask you, is it?
Do you honestly think you can by-pass the tiger
In the blood so easily? Can you write-off the river
Of man's primitive instinct quite so cheerfully? Have we
Really changed so much in five thousand years
That we are a different creature from Chinese and
Indians,

Not to mention those ever-deplorable Latins,
Who actually plunge into depths of crime for love,
Who kill rather than give up a man or a woman?
Will you, the representatives of our Western
Way of life, kindly ask yourselves that for a moment?

JUDGE: This isn't half bad. You're doing it well. Keep
at them.

FOREMAN: I think I see—I hope I see—a faint
Half-cousin-several-times-removed of a flicker of

FOREMAN: Now what happens?

JUDGE: If you will

Kindly return me that wig, I propose to put it on
Properly, and sum up.

FOREMAN (*handing over the wig*): Bravo to you! So you
Take the spirit of my speech!

JUDGE (*returning to dais*): The less we hear about
Taking spirits, the better. All the same, I do.
Now then. Hm! Members of the jury, you have
Heard the counsel for the defence deliver
His eloquent plea, one of the most able and fluent,
If I may say so, this court has experienced. Hm.
But do not allow yourself to be carried away
By eloquence. Facts are facts. The prisoner has pleaded
Guilty. Even if he had not, traces of
His depredations are all around you. Hm.
What counsel has done, is appeal for mitigation
In the circumstance of that offence, of which
You will undoubtedly find the prisoner guilty.

FOREMAN: Surely we might let you off——

JUDGE: Mister Foreman,
I am directing this jury, not you. Hm. What rider
You may care to add is another question.
Members of the jury, you may retire, and
Consider your verdict.

USHER: This way please.

FOREMAN: What, out in that passage?
No, not likely. It won't take a moment. Look here now.
(*He whispers with JURY. CLERK hands papers to JUDGE.*)

CLERK: Here are the papers of the case, your Honour.
I didn't get down quite all that he said, but then
He went a bit too quick for me.

JUDGE: Never mind, clerk.

He's been a bit too quick for me too. It's all
The same in the end as it happens.

(Tearing papers.)

CLERK: O sir, you shouldn't
Do that!

JUDGE: I shall do what I please for the moment.
I haven't been sentenced yet. Well, gentlemen, have you
Considered your verdict.

FOREMAN: We have.

JUDGE: Do you find the prisoner
Guilty or not guilty?

FOREMAN: We find him guilty.

JUDGE: Ah!

FOREMAN: But with the strongest possible recom-
mendation
To leniency.

JUDGE: You do, eh?

FOREMAN: Yes, sir, we all do.

JUDGE: Hm. Very well. I shall now therefore pronounce
Judgment. The cost of the damage to this court-house
Has been assessed at ninety-eight dollars.

USHER: And there's
My overtime, mind!

JUDGE: There is also the usher's overtime.
That is the cost of material damage. But we
Must consider the moral damage, the shock
To Justice herself.

My judgment is that the prisoner,
Having been found guilty, should pay into this Court
The sum of one hundred and twenty dollars, and be
Bound over not to commit a similar act
For the rest of his natural life. Clerk, will you please
Collect from the prisoner?

FOREMAN: Collect from you? No!

That was never the intention of the jury,
Not of this jury, I'll swear. Just look at them! No!
How can we possibly let you pay this fine, when
You are a public benefactor!

JUDGE: Stetson, I don't quite——

FOREMAN: You have assessed this fine on the damage
done, not

Only to this Court, but to Justice. I say
That far from damaging Justice, you have assisted her,
Helped to give her a new look, which, as usual,
Turns out to be an old fashion. Didn't the ancient
Persians have just this system of judging cases?
First, sober; then, the same evening, drunk; and having
Combed the night's debauch from their learned beards,
The following morning came to a final decision.
The wisdom of the ancients, you see; you have
Rediscovered it for us, and more. You have let
The daylight of life into Justice.

USHER: If you mean that window
You should have seen the way he smashed it. The
inkpot
Went through clean as a whistle.

FOREMAN: Not just that window.
Ladies and gentlemen, what about all those shutters,
Bolts and catches in our lives? Don't they all need
Opening? What opens them half so well as now and
again
Getting a little drunk? And a little drink is
A part of life, and what is a part of life should
Be a part of the Law. Into this temperate Court
This man here has brought the intemperate world,
Whose faults are fresh and whose failings are more to be
prized
Than all the finished calculation of reason,

The monster numbskull of the frozen brain,
 Whose laws everybody is supposed to obey, and
 No one does, the sum that never works out
 Because men are not just numbers, however many
 Their mass. This man has, I maintain, proved this
 By his deviation, his considerable wobble
 Out of the straight. And should we fine him for that,
 Fine him because he showed us justice was human?
 No. We should pay his fine ourselves!

JUDGE: What? You pay it?

FOREMAN (*handing round his hat*): I said, pay it ourselves.

Come on now, here's my
 Hat, and here's ten dollars in it. Ten from each of us
 And the fine's paid. Thank you, sir, and you, and you,
 and you.

Much obliged, madam!

CLERK: Gracious, everyone's paying it!

He really must have a personality.

USHER: Glamour

Is what you and I lack, old chap. Not a hope of it.

JUDGE: I cannot prevent this unprecedented occurrence
 Even if I wished.

FOREMAN: Of course you shouldn't.

Here's the money. Correct, I think. Will you count it,
 Clerk?

CLERK: Yes, yes. Yes, it's all here. I must give you
 A receipt.

FOREMAN: No, no. We trust you not to go spending it
 On drink.

CLERK: On drink! Oh dear no! I——

USHER: That's the sort of double-talk

You don't understand. Here, give it to me, sir.
 I know what you mean. I'll be back in a minute.

(*Exit.*)

CLERK: Where has he gone with it? I don't——

FOREMAN: The fullness of time will
Reveal all.

CLERK: Will it?

FOREMAN: Yes.

CLERK: I do hope it will then.

JUDGE: Hm! There is only one more thing to do, and that is
Dismiss the jury. Ladies and gentlemen, you have
Discharged a difficult, and, I must say, at some times
Puzzling task with complete propriety. You have been,
Shall we say, a model jury. You are
Exempted from serving on any other juries
For ninety-nine years.

FOREMAN: That ought to last you.

JUDGE: And now
You may go.

USHER (*returning*): This way out. This way.
(*JURY files out.*)

JUDGE: Except
You, Mister Stetson. You may stay.

FOREMAN (*innocently*): What me?
Haven't you finished with me?

JUDGE (*taking off robes and wig*): No, nor you,
Usher, nor yet you, clerk.

CLERK: What, is there another
Case to be tried?

USHER (*producing bottles*): No need for a case. A couple
Of bottles. These ought to do us.

JUDGE: They ought to. Pull up
Your benches, gentlemen. Usher, fetch the glasses
From the wash-house.

USHER (*running out*): Back in a shake of a ram's tail, sir.

CLERK: Sir, forgive me, but is this wise? Your position,
My position——

JUDGE (*opening bottle*): Clerk, the position of all of us
On this impossible world leaves us only one option.

I suppose, Stetson, your wife is not expecting you!

FOREMAN: My—what? Why, gosh darn it, I'd clean
forgotten about her!

The JUDGE looks stern, then joins in the laughter.

The USHER returns with glasses and they all drink as

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